

ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION NEWS



P.O. BOX 1419, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND 02840

SPRING, 1996 NUMBER 20

KELLEY HAS CROSSED THE BAR



The flag at the Rose Island Lighthouse was flown at half mast for Kelley the Lighthouse dog who died of cancer on December 30, 1995.

Visitors to the Lighthouse will fondly remember Kelley as the playful golden retriever who followed them around and helped them clean up the beaches. True to his breed, Kelley would struggle and literally knock his teeth out to bring back surprisingly large rocks from the water. Then he would gladly help you eat your lunch.

When not with Charlotte helping with school groups at the Lighthouse, Kelley

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REMEMBER

From April 1st to July 15th access to the Island is limited. Due to bird nesting season only small groups, school tours and overnight visitors to the Lighthouse are allowed on the Island.

We want to encourage nesting on the Island, so no boats are allowed to be beached during this period. To limit disruption to the nesting bird population, and to help insure your own safety, please respect these dates!



L-R) Sam Chase, Karen Augeri Benson (RILF Vice-President), John "Fud" Benson and Pat Chase enjoying the New Year's Day Picnic on Rose Island.

NEW YEAR'S DAY PICNIC ON ROSE ISLAND

More than three dozen traditionalists attended the annual News Year's Day Pot Luck Picnic on Rose Island. This event, while not for the faint hearted, is a time-honored gathering of RILF members. Blessed with a sunny, mild day, groups were shuttled out to the Island from the Goat Island fuel dock, compliments of Ron Ackman of Oldport Marine Services.

Almost everyone seemed to be toting canvas bags loaded with savory treats. Pot luck dishes emerged even before the fire was started and included the always reliable "Hoppin John" a.k.a. black-eyed peas, which are said to bring good luck if eaten on January 1. With help from DEM's Bob Sutton, a perfect cooking and bon fire was started. While the coals were burning down, families and friends hit the beach for a combination shore clean-up and firewood collection run. Then the eating and socializing began in earnest.

Among those who were able to join us to enjoy the very fine day were Dennis Nixon and family, Bob and Linda Sutton, and Jim and Joan Breakell and family from Jamestown; Stan Mazurowski, Laurie Shaw and John Dalessio joined us from Newport; Bob and Grace Mahoney from Cranston; and Dulcy and James O'Rourke came from East Haddam, Connecticut.

Karen and John Benson hiked into the rookery area to check on the abandoned heron and ibis nests. Scattered throughout the low brush and trees and piled with perfect miniature mounds of snow, the effect was rather like viewing confections arranged in a bakery window!



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

EXPANDED VISION TAKING SHAPE

We have a technical assistance consultant! Thanks to the generosity of the Prince Charitable Trusts, we were able to hire Deborah Linnell from Wickford, RI, to help us with our vision and strategic planning for the Lighthouse and the rest of Rose Island. Deb's physical stamina and board development skills were put to the test for a frigid January boat trip to the Lighthouse, where we held our Board retreat (where else?)

As many of you know, the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation (RILF) was established in 1984 to restore, maintain and operate the Lighthouse as a public historic site. RILF grew over the next nine years from 60 members to over a thousand who, along with businesses, charitable foundations and the government, contributed over \$1 million worth of hard work, materials and actual dollars, to achieve our goal — an award winning restoration which was completed with the crowning touch: the light relit on August 7, 1993 and put back on the charts.

Since that glorious evening, we have worked to make RILF self-sustaining. We have also reached this goal. Thanks to your continued membership support along with our fundraising events, tours and educational light-house-keeping program income, we have met our operating budget each year.

Thus, with these goals achieved and guided by the input we received from our member survey, we needed to update our purpose statement to reflect 1) the environmental role of RILF, as well as 2) our vision for the rest of Rose Island, while 3) remaining consistent with our original charter. The following statement was adopted by the board:

The purpose of the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation is to preserve the historic and environmental integrity of Rose Island, to maintain and operate its Lighthouse and to provide education and public access for all people.

We hope this expanded vision meets with your approval. You can let us know by your continued support through membership, school program support, contributions, attending our events and also by letting me hear from you directly. I can be reached at 401-842-0038.

Over the next few months, Deb Linnell will be conducting a feasibility study to determine if we should enter into a capital campaign to purchase the rest of Rose Island. If she calls on you, I hope you will give her your full support.

Geraldine Pilkington, President

WHERE THERE'S A WILL... What a legacy! Have you considered remembering Rose Island in your will? Now there's an excellent way to help preserve Rose Island's wonderful historic and environmental resources forever. For more information on how to make a bequest or to establish a trust, please write or call our President, Geri Pilkington, at 842-0038.

ROSE ISLAND FROM 1820 THROUGH WORLD WAR I

By Charlotte E. Johnson

In our last issue we began a series of articles on the history of Rose Island and its lighthouse, promising a whole book with maps and many photos in 1996. Since Charlotte now has a notebook computer, the likelihood of the book's being published is greatly increased. We hope you will all stay tuned in.

In 1820 an Asiatic cholera epidemic began to spread and, because of its isolated location, Rose Island was chosen as the site of the quarantine hospital.¹

In 1865 the commander of Fort Adams was authorized to take over Rose Island, which was not in use at the time, to prevent unauthorized persons from taking sand and stone from the island.

In 1869 the Rose Island Lighthouse was built on the southwest circular bastion of Fort Hamilton at a cost of \$7,500.

A photograph from the U.S. Lighthouse Society's collection (See Figure B) shows how the west side of Fort Hamilton looked with its breastwork for guns. The fog bell tower wasn't erected and fitted with bell and striking apparatus until 1885.

Again, because of its isolated location, in 1883 the Navy approved a request of the Ordnance Bureau to use part of Rose Island for excavating a pit for the storage of gun cotton, and by 1888 the island was used for the storage of other explosives as well. The next year permission was granted to use the island as a rifle range for practice with rapid-firing and machine guns.

In 1904 the 1.5 acre lighthouse reservation was separated from the rest of the island. While the reason for this action is not totally clear, it appears that restricting the range of the keeper's cove had become a necessity. Ownership of the majority of the island was in the hand of the War Department. In 1917 three of-

ficers and sixty men were assigned to protect Rose Island with four 3" guns from Boston.

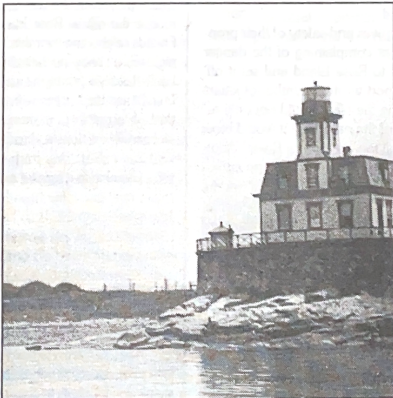
Through World Wars I and II Rose Island was part of Newport's Naval Torpedo Station where explosives were stored and torpedoes were armed. Happily, many of the modifications to the island's earlier masonry constructions actually served to preserve them. Since it was necessary to keep the explosives dry, several buildings received new roofs, which also kept the weather from deteriorating the building's stone and brick work. Both the northwest circular bastion and the barracks of Fort Hamilton were thus preserved. A 1916 photo of the barracks (Figure A) shows its look-out platform atop a new wooden roof with rain barrels for storing fresh water. A cement wall about five feet high was placed

on the north side of the barracks to protect the rest of the island in the event of an explosion. Thus, the barracks, described one hundred years earlier as being bomb proof, were still considered so, only now the bombs were inside!

Mr. Frank J. Toomey of Newport, who worked on Rose Island during World War I when he was 16 years old, remembered that in 1915 and 1916 T.N.T. was brought into Newport by rail and unloaded at Long Wharf, which was completely blocked off during the unloading. The kegs of dry powder were transferred to barges and towed to Rose Island, then the kegs were stored in the magazines on the island. Before the torpedoes were assembled the correct amount of powder was retrieved from the magazine by mule-drawn cart. The T.N.T. was "boiled" with other elements in cauldrons, stirred manually with wooden oars, and poured as a grayish-white liquid (called torpex) into the warheads. Once assembled, a torpedo could not be exploded without a detonator. The men performing the



Above Figure A, Below Figure B



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CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

It may be hard to believe but Spring is upon us! The first day of Spring is March 20th. As the weather warms up things kick into high gear for special projects at the Lighthouse. We need volunteers to perform general maintenance. Carpenters, painters, masons and laborers are always welcomed. One major project planned for this season is to paint the bastion wall. We also have plenty of boat maintenance scheduled. When the boat is hauled out we will need painters, carpenters and mechanics to give her a much needed overhaul. This has been a tough, cold, windy winter for our boat "Light A Rose".

Our garden was such a success last year that we would like to expand the beds this year. Helping hands are needed to turn the existing beds and dig new ones. We plan to start regular Saturday volunteer sessions on May 4th and to continue each Saturday throughout the Spring. Please call volunteer coordinator, Karen Benson, at 847-2128 for more information or to sign up for your favorite job.

For Museum/Office projects, we need volunteers to take photographs for the newsletter, and to stuff brochures. We also need research assistants and phone callers who can commit two hours per week to help with our Membership and Fundraising Drives. The next major volunteer opportunity event is our Rose Garden Tea Party, scheduled for June 22.

We will match your special skills or interests with your volunteer assignment. RILF operations are bolstered by a strong, member-based cadre of volunteers. Volunteers help keep operating costs down so that more of our funds can be channeled directly into programs. We have a lot of ways for you to get involved!

History, from page 3

"boiling" task worked two hours on to one hour off. They wore respirators and were provided with a plug of tobacco and two quarts of milk daily. Even so, the fumes tanned their complexions and bleached their hair blond.

Newporters concerned for their lives and safety of their property wrote to the War Department complaining of the danger should an enemy spy sneak out to Rose Island and set it off. One Dr. Horace P. Beck of Newport wrote a number of letters during 1917 and 1918, estimating the blast would not only remove Rose Island from the face of the earth, but it would blow out all the windows up the Bay all the way to Fall River. Additional precautions were taken, therefore, and it became necessary for the lighthouse keeper's relatives to get passes from the Torpedo Station Commander on Goat Island before visiting their family, the Charles Curtises, on Rose Island. As Richard Champlin vividly described it in his Newport History article Rose Island Centennial, "the life of the Keeper had all the comforts of life on a powder keg!"

Notes: "Little more is known about the quarantine use, other than from a letter George Bell wrote 11 years ago to the Newport Historical Society. Bell was keeper of the lighthouse in 1938 when the water tower was being installed. He claimed that the excavations for the water lines uncovered human remains that the workmen reinterred in a metal box. An archaeological survey prepared in 1985, however, failed to locate either the box or its contents."

NEW FLAGS FOR OLD

Paddy Ginther and Rip Gerry of Portsmouth, RI, take down the flag that probably would have been blown away on January 19, 1996 when the North Cape went aground off Moonstone Beach.

The winds gust to 62 miles per hour at the Lighthouse. Paddy and Rip won the privilege of buying the Lighthouse a new flag since they were keepers when the highest winds hit in January. Other "winners" are Tim Masick of New York (62 mph on July 15, 1995) and Pat and Gale (no joke!) Broderick of East Hartford, CT (74 mph on February 25 of this year). So you won't be seeing flags on our wish list for a while!



THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING, AND GIVING, AND GIVING

By Beth Clarke

Is it valid to make a New Year's resolution after the first of the year?

At the end of the Board retreat this January, our consultant Deb Linnell asked each one of us, "What is your own personal goal this year for the Rose Island Lighthouse?" I answered that I wanted to see more people spending the night at the Lighthouse. Aside from working in the office, I believe I can accomplish this goal, even if it is in my own, small way.

I have taken my friends and family out with me to the Lighthouse over the past two years. (Have I really been working here that long?) My mother comes down yearly for an overnight visit, and in honor of her 60th birthday, I gave her a gift certificate for the week of her choice (however, she was rather disappointed that she did not also receive the official Rose Island Lighthouse tote bag she wanted). Friends celebrating their third wedding anniversary went out for the night while I baby-sat their children (I think they got more sleep than I did). It is always a big hit with people visiting from out of town, and I send them back home with plenty of brochures, which has brought the Lighthouse even more visitors. Now I am sending gift certificates for special occasions and to thank people who have been especially kind to me (hint). My cousin was the first to use her certificate, and she's planning to return for a week this fall (actually, the same month as my mother... what have I done?). I believe I have made a New Year's resolution that I can keep.

I have noticed that people who stayed out at the Lighthouse this past year purchased gift certificates for Christmas and wedding presents more frequently than others. It is a gift that keeps on giving. People who spend the night often become more involved through joining the membership, attending events and purchasing certificates for others to experience the Lighthouse, and so the circle grows bigger. If you are trying to find something for the person who has everything, consider a gift certificate for a night at the Lighthouse. They will thank you for years to come, and so will the Lighthouse.

When You Wish Upon A

This is our wish list of things we need at the Lighthouse or in the office that will help make our programs more fun or lives a bit easier. Spring cleaning time is here....Don't throw it away! Used gear is always appreciated at the Lighthouse, and, of course, all donations are tax-deductible. We're looking for:

- ★ A plastic floor pad (like the ones that go under an office chair)
- ★ A good telescope and/or pair of binoculars
- ★ Old wooden window sash and/or French doors (six-over-six and odd shapes are particularly useful. We need the wood frames so we're not concerned about the condition of the glass)
- ★ Bookshelves and book cases of any kind
- ★ An armoire or free standing cabinet for coats, mops and brooms)
- ★ Frequent flyer miles
- ★ Old-fashioned meat grinder
- ★ Small picture frames
- ★ Old ceiling light or chandelier
- ★ Small braided, hooked or oriental scatter rugs
- ★ Full size metal frame bed (painted iron or brass, if we can get it)

If you think you have something we can use, please contact Charlotte Johnson, Executive Director at 401-847-4242 or send a picture to her at the office address.

THANKS

We asked and the following people have given. We give thanks to...**Ann Wylie**, Innkeeper of **Culpeper House** for a whole case of rose scented guest soaps (what other flavor would do?). . . **Harold Graves** and **Al Conti** of **Armory Antiques and Fine Art Center** for their \$500 donation, which was half the proceeds from admissions to their Winterfest Antique Show and Sale. . . **Helen Morris**, who pleased us with her cross stitching of the Lighthouse, and **Anita Shadick**, who came up with two cross stitched bathroom mottos in anticipation of the upcoming summer drought. They read "3 P's or a Poo Please"! . . . We also thank **Bob and Elizabeth Tiedemann** for a signed poster of *Gleam* and *Northern Light* reaching in front of the Rose Island Lighthouse and to **Arnold Art** (where the poster can be bought) for their generously-discounted framing of it. . . To **Jack and Carol Farley** go thanks for two more piano rolls. Since piano rolls are made of paper, they wear out and always have need of as many as we can get (hint, hint). . . To **Evan and Amy Smith** for a Time-Life book, *Atlantic Beaches* for our Library, and last but certainly not least, to **Joe Rhodes** of **Aquidneck Island Heating** in Portsmouth, RI for tuning up and starting our wonderfully-efficient boiler for the winter. "How efficient?" you

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Board of Directors Retreat

To start off the New Year our intrepid Board of Directors braved freezing temperatures to attend a day-long retreat at the Lighthouse. On the boat ride to Rose Island we commented (through chattering teeth) that the sea was certainly warmer than the air that day, and proof was visible in the form of sea smoke rising over the harbor. Once ashore we were glad for the toasty fire in the stove left by Joe Davis, who had spent the night before.

After some hot coffee the group got to work, beginning with a history of RILF and early efforts to protect the Island from development. The morning was facilitated by our new consultant, Deb Linnell, who guided the Board through the important process of improving its stewardship and decision making responsibilities on behalf of RILF.

Over the course of the next few hours the Board worked en masse and in small groups to focus on the standing purpose of RILF. We explored and refined our goals including: the environmental, historic and maritime heritage aspects of our mission. The notion that the Island be utilized as an "open public site" was given much discussion, as was our desire of becoming and remaining self-sustaining. We summarized our program philosophy—how we marry the historical preservation, educational, environmental and maritime history as follows: Rose Island is a

place where people can look backward as well as forward. Through the restoration process visitors learn about protecting the past. Through the environmental programs they learn about protecting the future. The Island is a microcosm, where people come and learn how to be more self-sufficient. When they leave they apply what they have learned to the rest of the world.

The group then moved on to brainstorm the key goals for 1996. Several important goals were identified: Preserving the Lighthouse and the Island to maintain their natural and

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After a hard day's work. L-R back row: Charlotte Johnson, Bonnie Brayton Kennedy, Gen Pilkington, Dave Hurd, Beth Clarke and Glenn Gardiner. Front row: Karen Benson, Evan Smith, Jeff Hall and Don Weeden.

HARBOR SEALS HAUL OUT AT CITING ROCK

If you can take your eyes off the road when crossing the Newport Bridge at low tide, you'll usually see up to two dozen harbor seals hauled out at Citing Rock on the northeast side of Rose Island. They will be here until early May or so, when they'll head for Maine to have their pups.

At a Save The Bay Narragansett BayWatcher Program last month, staff biologist Rob Nawojchik from Mystic Marinelife Aquarium filled us in on the "habitat" dos and don'ts of these wonderful creatures. He said they like to haul out every day to

rest, usually on an unattached bunch of rocks where they can feel safe. If you come too close in a boat and cause them to stop their resting and scamper into



the water, you've disturbed their habitat.

We've noticed that seals aren't bothered so much by lobster boats since they usually come with food (we call it bait). Kayaks, however, scare the seals off quite quickly. No wonder, they've been hunted for thousands of years from these craft, so it's probably become instinctual.

Seals and other mammals like whales and dolphin, whether alive or dead, are protected by the federal government. If you find one that is dead, stranded or being harassed, immediately call the Mystic Marinelife Aquarium at 203-572-5955 or the DEM's 24-hour hotline: 800-448-1336.

If you would like to participate in Save The Bay's Marine Mammal Monitoring program, please call Wenley Ferguson at 401-272-3540.

EMBLEM REVISED

Have you caught us with different years? Wayne Wheeler of the US Lighthouse Society did. Our first logo declared the Lighthouse "Established 1869." Actually, says Wayne, that's close but wrong. The Lighthouse was built in 1869 (adding at a cost of \$75,000), but the light wasn't formally established until January 20, 1870. Our members will receive new emblems reflecting the formal, official 1870 date the light was established.



ELEVEN LADIES SPINNING

Sounds like a line from a Christmas song! Ladies from Massachusetts and Rhode Island have banded together as Bayberry Spinners. They heard about the Lighthouse at Norman Bird Sanctuary's Harvest Fair and decided to spend a couple of nights at the Lighthouse.



Janet Hensle even dressed for the turn-of-the-century lighthouse look



Lida "Rose" Cavanaugh got nicknamed because of her sweater with roses on it



Nancy Rodrigues and Paulette Ferland spin up a yarn

Thanks continued from page 5

ask. Our radiant, in-floor heating system was turned on in November and as of March 9 we had used only 415 gallons of heating oil. WOW! It makes us happy to be saving the environment from pollution, and since our heating fuel is brought out in barrels on our boat, it saves us a lot of effort, too. We can imagine Curt Bunting looking down on us with a nice warm smile.

Benefit for our fishing fleet in the wake of the oil spill. Join us for a
Night of Camaraderie Among Seafarers

Saturday March 30 4-8PM @ Seamen's Institute

Admission \$20 per person

RSVP to Seamen's Church Institute, 18 Market Square, Newport, RI 02840



EARLY BIRD MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The early bird catches the worm and also saves us the costs of further notices, so won't you consider helping us two ways by sending your membership dues today?

Definition of Basic Membership Categories:

\$10 Student - For persons under 18 years of age.

\$15 Senior - For persons over 65 years of age.

\$20 Individual - For one person.

\$35 Family - For one or two adults and their children or grandchildren under the age of 18 living at home.

\$50 and up - For businesses and super generous people of all ages.

Your Membership contribution in any category...

- Allows you free admission to the beautifully restored Lighthouse, plus discounts on events, tours and merchandise.
- Supports our environmental education programs for children & adults.
- Keeps you informed of activities through our newsletter and notices.
- Assures you of receiving advance invitations to our special events.
- Gets you a membership renewal notice early next spring.
- Is fully tax-deductible in all categories.
- Helps us maintain the Lighthouse and protect its beautiful surroundings as the maritime gateway to Newport Harbor.
- Makes you proud to be a member every time you cross the Newport Bridge and see that beautiful Lighthouse down there!

We look forward to welcoming you aboard and seeing you and your guests at the Lighthouse and at our events!!

Please detach and mail the following form along with your payment to:
"R I L F" P.O. Box 1419, Newport, RI 02840-0997 Phone: 401-847-4242

----- Detach Here -----

Please include your current phone number and write "same" if the following information matches your mailing label on the reverse side:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____
Street / P.O. Box City State Zip

CHECK APPROPRIATE BOXES:

- ☐ New Membership
☐ Renewal

- ☐ \$ 10 Student
☐ \$ 15 Senior
☐ \$ 20 Individual
☐ \$ 35 Family
☐ \$ 50 Business

- ☐ \$ 50 Inspector
☐ \$ 100 Superintendent
☐ \$ 250 Assistant Keeper
☐ \$ 500 Associate Keeper
☐ \$1,000 Head Keeper

ENCLOSED ARE: ☐ Annual dues in the category checked above
☐ Additional sponsorship of _____ students @\$10

\$ _____
\$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED

\$ _____

CALL ME TO HELP IN THESE AREAS:

(Check all that apply, include your phone number above and make any comments on the reverse side.)

- ☐ Guide/Education
☐ Events
☐ Telephoning

- ☐ Handyperson/Carpenter
☐ Newsletter & Mailings
☐ Annual Boat Haul

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, P.O. Box 1419, Newport, RI 02840-0997, 401-847-4242

Retreat, from page 5

historical values in perpetuity. Maintaining past gains and accomplishments in terms of programs. Increasing membership in RILF. Increasing the number of visitors and increasing access, keeping in mind the balance with the environmental needs of the Island's flora and fauna.

All Board members came away from this retreat with specific assignments to evaluate our options for attaining these goals. Each member expressed his or her hoped-for outcomes for 1996. Everyone agreed that the meeting was a most productive effort and that, with our combined energies, The Board could realize many new possibilities for RILF.

Kelley, from page 1

could be seen sitting up proudly next to his life-long companion and best friend, Captain Joe Davis, as they drove around Newport in their silver Ford pick up truck.

Everyone agrees that while Kelley never saved any lives at the lighthouse per se, he was a lifesaver in the sense that we never worried about dying from boredom with him around! He was a very perfect lighthouse dog.

Kelley was buried at Rose Island, facing the prevailing southwest breeze, where he will watch over the Lighthouse forever.



April Fool's Day Dinner & Dance

Join us for a rollicking good time at our fifth annual RILF Spaghetti Dinner & Dance scheduled for Monday, April 1st at the Trinity Church Great Hall on Mill Street. This year's theme is "Under the Sea" with decorations being provided by local Brownie Troop 706 that meets at Fort Adams. A special connection is their troop crest — a red rose! Tickets are limited, so reserve your tickets now for this popular family event which promises to be full of fun, prizes and SUR-prizes for all ages.

Tickets are available in advance to members. They are \$12.00 for adults and \$8.00 for children if paid by March 29. We will also honor a \$35 maximum cost per family if we have payment by that date. Tickets at the door will be \$14.00 for adults and \$10.00 for children. Entrance to Trinity's Great Hall is at 26 Mill Street, in the basement of the Carr-Rice House. Ample parking is available in the Mary Street parking lot.

The evening will start at 6 p.m. An extra added attraction this year will be entertainment, music and dancing, compliments of DJ Paul Giammarco and his wife Kathy. Dinner, served family style, includes spaghetti and meatballs, tossed salad, bread, soft drink, coffee and dessert. Each dinner comes with a special Lighthouse prize or surprise! (Like a night for two at the lighthouse, or a free trip to Rose Island—to paint the dock.) There will be a cash bar for beer and wine.

To reserve your tickets call Beth or Charlotte at 847-4242 and make sure your payment is received by March 29th.

Or Current Resident

